

# At the Tipping Point

Security cooperation as an economy of force in the Marine Corps

by Gillian S. Oak & Maj James S. Pryor

***“Any unnecessary expenditure of time, every unnecessary detour, is a waste of strength and thus abhorrent to strategic thought.”***

***—Clausewitz***

Inherent in Marine Corps culture is the philosophy of doing more with less—the principle of economy of force. Defined as “[allocating] minimum essential combat power to secondary efforts,”<sup>1</sup> economy of force is a concept that is fundamentally ingrained in every Marine. Marines have become particularly adept at ad-

justing to dynamic environments and conducting a diverse set of missions.<sup>2</sup> Institutional agility has consistently enabled the Marine Corps to drive the “tipping point”<sup>3</sup> of innovative concepts and technology throughout U.S. military history, including small wars doctrine, close air support, and amphibious operations, to current

counterinsurgency tactics and stability operations. Today Marines find themselves at the apex of another tipping point—this time dealing with the future of U.S. military planning and operations.

The 2008 *Guidance for Employment of the Force* directed a shift in how the military plans. It shifted the focus from contingency-based (a focus on how to respond to a crisis in one of several hotspots around the world) to strategy-based (a focus on shaping a world favorable to long-term U.S. interests) planning. While Afghanistan is currently the main effort, security cooperation (SC) activities offer the most cost-effective and sustainable option for maintaining force readiness and protecting our national interests in the long term. SC<sup>4</sup> is a set of activities by which the United States can advance its national interests through the principle of economy of force. This is especially important as the Department of Defense’s (DoD’s) budget—the largest discretionary budget of the American Government—is likely to be more scrutinized as Afghanistan and Iraq wind down. To maintain our status and position in the world, our Nation will have to garner the support of our allies to address challenges of mutual interest. Our military activities must enable the concept of “defense in depth”—building partnerships through SC activities to achieve an economy of force.

The Marine Corps is demonstrating economy of force on several levels. At the strategic level, the Corps is collaborating with the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) to develop and improve SC initiatives on the planning and assessment approaches through activities such as the SC Reform Task Force and the Defense Institution Reform Initiative, which assists partner-

***>Ms. Oak is an Associate, Booz Allen Hamilton, currently assigned to SCETC as a subject matter expert on foreign security forces and the design of security cooperation engagement plans.***

***>>Maj Pryor is a logistics officer. He is currently serving as Team Leader and Regional Planner, Europe and Africa theaters, SCETC.***



***Military-to-military familiarization events are designed to increase interoperability. (Photo by Cpl Michele Watson.)***

nations through national- and ministerial-level assessments, planning, and assistance.

processes and focused requirements in the coming years. In other words, maritime forces will use the principle of

---

***The Marine Corps, Navy, and Coast Guard have partnered to improve efficiencies for providing combatant commanders force packages that meet expanding SC requirements with more predictable processes and focused requirements in the coming years.***

---

At the operational level, the Marine Corps is collaborating with other Services to integrate and standardize SC planning processes and functions. The Marine Corps, Navy, and Coast Guard have partnered to improve efficiencies for providing combatant commanders force packages that meet expanding SC requirements with more predictable

economy of force to eliminate redundant efforts and waste of resources. Marine Corps influence has begun to expand beyond the maritime realm as well. Subject matter experts from Marine Corps SC-enabling organizations have been invited to attend SC wargaming conferences for the Departments of the Army and Navy. The

Marine Corps is also influencing DoD organizations by educating the SC workforce as the only Service that provides an SC-specific planner's course. This course, accredited by the Defense Institute for Security Assistance Management, provides training and education for leaders across the DoD.

Economy of force is also being built at the tactical level. Marine Corps SC-enabling organizations provide deployable teams and units for executing SC activities and "reachback" capability across several SC functions, including management, prioritization, planning, training, education, and sourcing, which enable SC planners to effectively analyze, design, develop, implement, and evaluate SC plans and activities. The International Affairs Branch (office code PLU), Headquarters Marine Corps Plans, Policy and Operations Department, is the Marine Corps' central coordinating agency for SC. While providing SC policy and direction for

# SOUND OFF!

Put pen to paper and weigh in boldly on the issues that matter to Marines!  
**Write for *Marine Corps Gazette***

**Here is our Monthly Focal Point Plan for 2011:**

**May – Aviation:** Aviation C<sup>2</sup>, logistics, unmanned systems, pilot training, and the future of Marine aviation.

**September – New Programs:** What does the future hold for communications, support equipment, weapons, and individual Marines? What Marines need and why they don't have it, etc.

**October – Modern Day Marine:** What the MAGTF needs to prevail into the future.

**November – Esprit & History:** Key events in Marine Corps History. Personal accounts, unique perspectives, and the "Sting" of battle exposed.



Willing to face lead and your country's enemies without flinching...

NOW we ask you to overcome the intimidation of facing a blank piece of paper!

**Get published in YOUR Professional Journal — *Marine Corps Gazette***

the Marine Corps, PLU also compiles SC best practices from Marine Corps SC-enabling organizations to drive change in the Joint Staff and the OSD. The Security Cooperation Education and Training Center (SCETC) is responsible for SC training and education, including management of the security assistance education and training programs, civil-military operations and civil affairs schools, and SC planning education and training. SCETC also develops partner-nation security force (PNSF) SC engagement plans based on Service-level assessments in support of Marine components. The Marine Corps Training and Advisory Group provides security force assistance-related training to the Operating Forces and Marine Forces Reserve and, as required, deploys properly manned, trained, and equipped training and advisor teams. Various other Marine Corps organizations provide support to SC as outlined in the *Marine Corps Campaign Support Plan*.

The Marine Corps is leading the Services in developing a systematic process for planning, managing, and executing SC events and activities. The process begins with a baseline Service-level assessment, during which teams of experts assess PNSFs at the request of the Marine Forces (MarFors). Planning teams from SCETC then develop a Security Cooperation Engagement Plan, which is a multiyear plan to assist the MarFors in meeting strategic, operational, tactical, and PNSF-specified objectives. Long-range event planning enables resource forecasting in global force management and management in theater SC management information system. To help posture itself for executing SC activities, the Marine Corps' language and culture regionalization program will establish a cadre of culturally attuned personnel to improve tactical operations, planning, and execution. In addition, distributed operations create an economy of force by enabling small units to operate independently across a wide geographical region. Units will be manned, trained, and equipped, enabling com-



**Graduation ceremonies follow training programs that cover patrolling, motorized operations, and weapons handling. (Photo by 2dLt Nicole Teat.)**

pany-sized units to perform functions normally reserved for the battalion level.

As the force-in-readiness, the Marine Corps is expected to be the "first in," exhibit excellence at the small unit level, and be able to thrive in austere and expeditionary environments. These attributes make the Marine Corps ideal for conducting SC activities. The future will demand an increase in both SC activities and force readiness to deal with unforeseen contingencies. SC will generate a new set of challenges for the military as it enters a new era of resource limitations. Marines will always achieve their top priority—mission accomplishment—whether the situation is one of armed conflict, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, civil-military operations, building partnership capacity, or peace-keeping missions. The Marine Corps will continue to leverage its institutional agility to develop innovative, effective tools and methods to drive change and influence the tipping point of future military planning and operations.

## Notes

1. Headquarters Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-0, Marine Corps Operations*, Washington, DC, 2001, Appendix B.
2. Including military engagement, SC, deterrence to prevent conflict, crisis response and limited contingencies to contain conflict, and major operations and campaigns associated with both conventional and irregular wars. See *Marine Corps Operating Concepts*, p. 2.
3. Malcolm Gladwell introduced us to the concept of the tipping point: the critical mass in a cycle of change that spreads rapidly (like a virus). Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, MA, 2002.
4. All DOD interactions with foreign defense establishments to build their capacity and capability, facilitate access, and build relationships—complemented by similar activities by other federal agencies, provides the framework for the persistent engagement that is the first line of defense against persistent conflict.

This definition may be found in *Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, and *Joint Publication 3-07.1, Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Operations to Support Foreign Internal Defense*, Joint Staff, Washington, DC.

